LETTERS@METRO.US

KINGSLEY FLOOD'S KILLER NEW ALBUM {page 16}

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Max 26°
Min 21°

BOSTON
Thursday, February 7, 2013

1978

The catastrophic Northeastern United States blizzard of 1978 pummelled Boston with record 27-plus inches a snow. At the time, it caused more than $520M in damages.

Blizzard expected to wallop Boston area with 24 inches of snow

ARE YOU READY FOR THIS?

Days after 35th anniversary of 1978 blizzard, storm could likely be a close second in some areas Forecasters warn travel could become 'impossible' {page 02}

2013

As of yesterday evening, the weather service forecasted that the storm could dump between 18 and 24 inches of snow on the Hub, making it the first major storm of 2013.

dating

Have a happy pal-entine's day, buddy!

Feb. 14 doesn't have to be just for lovers Tell your friends how you feel {page 13}

fashion week preview

In 2013, it's good to be Jason Wu

Designer dressed the first lady and introduced a new makeup line already this year {page 12}

1

In the news

169M

The University of Massachusetts said yesterday that it is directing a record $169 million in financial aid to students this fiscal year, up from $68.4 million in fiscal 2006. Financial aid needs are growing, according to UMass. More students are applying for it, and more are eligible for it than in past years. METRO

Today's local tweet

"Sayin it again #MBTA riders; @ what point do u think u should either leave earlier 4 work or find alternate transp.? DELAYS AREN'T NEW!"

@DJIMPACT1 IS FRUSTRATED WITH T RIDERS' FRUSTRATION

In the news

Brown

Brown may start gig with Fox News

MASSACHUSETTS. Former Sen. Scott Brown may become the newest talking head on Fox News. Brown, who lost reelection to Sen. Elizabeth Warren in November, is in negotiations to appear on the cable news network, according to the Globe. A spokesperson for the network did not say yesterday what exactly Brown's role on the channel would be and that talks are not yet final. BOSTON.COM

Cowan

Patrick in D.C., will attend Cowan swearing-in

MASSACHUSETTS. Gov. Deval Patrick is out of state traveling to Virginia to attend the U.S. House Democratic Caucus Issues Conference in Lansdowne. Patrick plans to remain in Washington long enough to see his former chief of staff William "Mo" Cowan be sworn in to the U.S. Senate today at noon by Vice President Joe Biden. Patrick plans to return to Massachusetts on Thursday, in time to prepare for what could be the first significant snowstorm of the season in Greater Boston on Friday. SHNS

Two feet of snow possible as blizzard heads toward Boston

Up to 24 inches of snow likely to fall on Friday and Saturday ◐ Weather service warns travel may become 'impossible' ◐ Storm hits same week as Blizzard of '78

NICOLAUS CZARNECKI/METRO

The Boston Public Garden was covered by a blanket of white after a Nor'easter hit in 2008.

Get ready for some snow, Greater Boston.

The National Weather Service has issued a "blizzard watch" for much of Eastern Massachusetts ahead of a storm that is currently expected to bury the region in white.

As of yesterday evening, the weather service forecasted that the storm could dump between 18 and 24 inches of snow on Boston.

"Heavy snow and strong winds will bring the potential for blizzard conditions," the NWS said in a winter weather message yesterday afternoon. "Snowfall rates of 2 to 3 inches per hour possible. Travel may become nearly impossible with blowing and drifting snow."

The "blizzard watch" is in effect from Friday morning through Saturday afternoon. Forecasts called for the snow to become heavy during Friday night and Saturday morning. Visibility could drop to less than one-quarter mile at times and wind gusts of up to 55 mph could blow across the region.

Mayor Thomas Menino's office yesterday urged commuters to heed alerts today as the city may warn people to stay off of the roads Friday.

Michael Naughton
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Storm anniversary

The forecasted blizzard comes on the same week of the 35-year anniversary of the Blizzard of '78.

That storm, which hit the area on Feb. 6 and Feb. 7, left the region buried in as much as four feet of snow (a storm weeks earlier had already left significant snow on the ground). The storm was blamed for the deaths of dozens of people and made roads impassible for days.

What is a blizzard watch?

The National Weather Service defines a blizzard watch as:

- The potential for considerable falling and/or blowing snow

35

- Sustained winds or frequent gusts over 35 mph

.25

- Visibility below one-quarter mile for at least three hours

Notable Boston blizzards

27.6

Boston's top snowstorm occurred over two days in the middle of February 2003, according to the National Weather Service. That storm left nearly 28 inches of snow on the ground in Boston.

27.1

The Blizzard of '78 comes in second with 27.1 inches.

News in brief

Man steals necklace from dead woman in funeral home

Police in Bridgewater are investigating a "low" crime in which a person stole a necklace from a dead woman in her casket just two hours before her funeral service was being held.

The site of the theft

Officers responded to the Prophett-Chapman Cole & Gleason Funeral Home in Bridgewater on Jan. 28, police said.

The funeral director told officers that a man came into the home at about 8 a.m. and identified himself as a relative of the 98-year-old woman. He asked the funeral director if he could see the woman and the director left him alone to "say a prayer," police said. After the man left, the funeral director noticed that a piece of jewelry was missing from the woman.

The jewelry was an 18-inch gold rope chain with a heart pendant on it. The pendant was the woman's wedding band that she'd had shaped into heart and wore it as a necklace.

"To steal a piece of jewelry at a funeral home from a person in a casket is about as low as you get," Lt. Thomas Schlatz said during a phone interview yesterday.

As of yesterday no charges had been filed. METRO/MN

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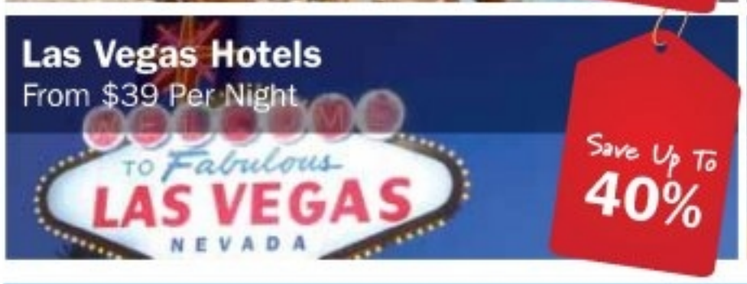

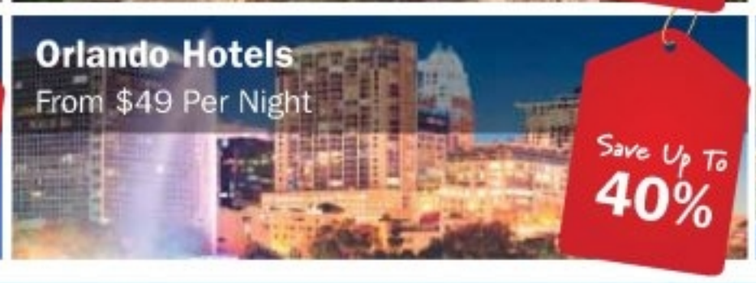

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In the news

State finds doctors to perform inmate's sex change

▶ Kosilek

State correction officials have spoken to six surgeons who have said they would be willing to perform a controversial sex change operation for an inmate serving a life sentence.

Department of Correction Commissioner Luis Spencer's filed an affadavit on Jan. 31 that was made public Tuesday. It detailed for a federal judge the work by the agency to proceed with the controversial ruling.

Michelle Kosilek, who was born Robert, sued the DOC in federal court for not providing her with a sex change and claimed it violated her Eighth Amendment rights. Last year, Chief Judge Mark Wolf issued a divisive ruling in which he sided with Kosilek and said she suffered from a "mental illness" that must be treated.

Kosilek is serving a life sentence after being convicted for killing her wife Cheryl in Mansfield in 1990.

The state has appealed the decision, but Wolf has ordered officials to make plans for the surgery should the appeal fail.

None of the six doctors work in Massachusetts or New York. Their names are redacted in the court filing.

Spencer wrote in his affidavit that DOC officials spoke with the doctors who all said they would perform the surgery. All but one said they would consider becoming licensed in Massachusetts, which would make transportation to and from a facility where the doctor could perform the surgery easier.

Most of the doctors also said they had performed hundreds of sex reassignment surgeries and their methods vary. Most of them also said that a 10- to 14-day hospitalization is necessary to recover.

Wolf had criticized the DOC for dragging its feet in making plans, but Spencer disagreed.

"The information ... demostrates that, far from 'foot-dragging,' the [DOC] has made substantial progress in taking the steps ... to provide Kosilek with [surgery]," Spencer said. METRO/MN

Next steps

Now that doctors have been found, the next steps are to determine logistics in providing the surgery, including:

- Getting the doctors licensed in state
- Determining transportation methods
- Correction officer staffing
- Finding a hospital site, said DOC Commissioner Luis Spencer
- Spencer also cited security concerns and where to house Kosilek pre- and post-surgery and during recuperation.

Boston named the best US city for single gents

Nerdwallet.com broke down the city's stats and named the Hub the perfect place for unmarried men

NICOLAUS CZARNECKI/METRO

▶ A contestant pitches pickup lines to The Bachelorette finalist Chris Lambton in this file photo from a Boston contest.

The ratio of single men to single women in Boston, along with the city's walkability, low unemployment rate and plentiful outing options helped the Hub score the top spot in a study of the nation's best places for bachelors.

Nerdwallet.com, a finance comparison website, on Monday ranked Boston as the best city because, according to the site, "Dates are a little pricier here, but the low unemployment rates makes it likely you'll both be able to afford it. There are plenty of date options, including Red Sox games, walking the Freedom Trail and dinner in the North End."

The notion that men seem to have their pick of single ladies sealed the deal. According to NerdWallet, the ratio of single men to single women is 93 to 100.

"I do agree with the ratio aspect, and I do hear the frustration in my female clients' voices when they say, 'All the good ones are taken,'" said Susan Baxter, founder of Hire A Boston Wing Woman, a professional "ice-breaker" service.

However, Baxter takes exception to the site claiming it's easy to meet people in Boston.

"We're pretty conservative as far as being outgoing. You can calculate the number of bars, gyms and restaurants, but it doesn't mean much when Bostonians are antisocial. People here are known for being a little cold," she said.

93 Ratio of single men to single ladies: 93/100

79 "Walk score," according to Nerd Wallet

1.3 Bars and gyms per 1,000 residents

28 The average cost of a date is $27.79.

Where to go to find your next prospect

In her travels, professional wingwoman Susan Baxter has found that these local spots are the best for bachelors:

For Mr. Distinguished:

- Oak Long Bar — "wonderful for an older crowd"
- Lolita Cocina & Tequila Bar — "a ton of women"

In the summer:

- During the summer, it's Seaport, Seaport, Seaport
- The roof deck of Legal Seafoods: "Women love margaritas"

Younger bachelors often frequent:

- Clerys
- Gem
- Julep bar
- Red Lantern

Calling all bachelors

Nerd Wallet called Boston the best bachelor city because:

1. **The odds are in your favor, boys:** There are more available women than men, which means less competition and higher odds of finding datable women.
2. **It's easy to meet people here:** The blog calculated the number of bars and gyms per 1,000 residents. Nerd Wallet said bachelors who live in a city packed with shops, restaurants and bars — like Boston — find it easier to meet people.
3. **You can afford to date here:** The site also looked at the cost of a cheap Hub date and considered the unemployment rate.

A Boston bachelor, who asked to be quoted only as John, said he has been "playing the field" here for about a decade and as far as he can tell, the city deserves first place.

"It's small, walkable and there are a lot of nice places indoors and outdoors," he said. "I think being a guy you have a wider range of single women everywhere you go, and for the most part I find [dating] is pretty affordable."

Morgan Rousseau
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MBTA campaign urges customers not to act like a bunch of animals

NICOLAUS CZARNECKI/METRO

▶ A sign featuring a group of elephants spraying water advises passengers not to spread their germs.

If you take a look around MBTA trains and buses today, you might notice some new, furry faces — in addition to the old ones.

The MBTA announced yesterday the launch of "Courtesy Critters" as part of its latest "Courtesy Counts" campaign.

It's the fifth campaign in 12 years meant to serve as a "friendly reminder to all of its customers of some things to keep in mind to ensure all riders have a pleasant and comfortable trip," officials said.

This is the first time the campaign has used a "light, humor-based tone" to push courtesy on the T, and the first time the T has used animals to tug at the heartstrings of its oftentimes cranky and disrespectful riders.

One of the posters features parrots on the T telling passengers not to "squawk on the phone," and another showing a pack of pigs pleads, "Don't hog a seat."

"Riding the T every day, I know how important it is to be respectful and kind to fellow passengers as well as operators," said MBTA General Manager Beverly Scott. "Sometimes we need to be reminded of the basics, and hopefully it will make everyone's commute a more pleasant one."

The suggestions given in the campaigns are based on common customer feedback and suggestions, such as sneezing into your elbow or giving up your seat for the elderly or disabled, according to a spokesman for the T.

Six different signs were designed in-house in the MBTA's Marketing Communications Department, and a total of 2,400 signs will be put up throughout the MBTA system, on both trains and buses.

Morgan Rousseau
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Important PSA: Don't be mean

The newest reminder — to be courteous to bus and train operators — has been added as the result of a recent string of abusive incidents targeting drivers. A cast of crabs reminds riders to be nice to operators, asking them "don't be a crab."

Boston couples to make out for Gillette's 'Kiss and Tell' experiment

VALUELINE

▶ Sexy stubble or sandpaper?

It turns out that stubble may be to blame for the decline of the kiss, which is why a shaving company asked couples at the Prudential Center yesterday to kiss and tell.

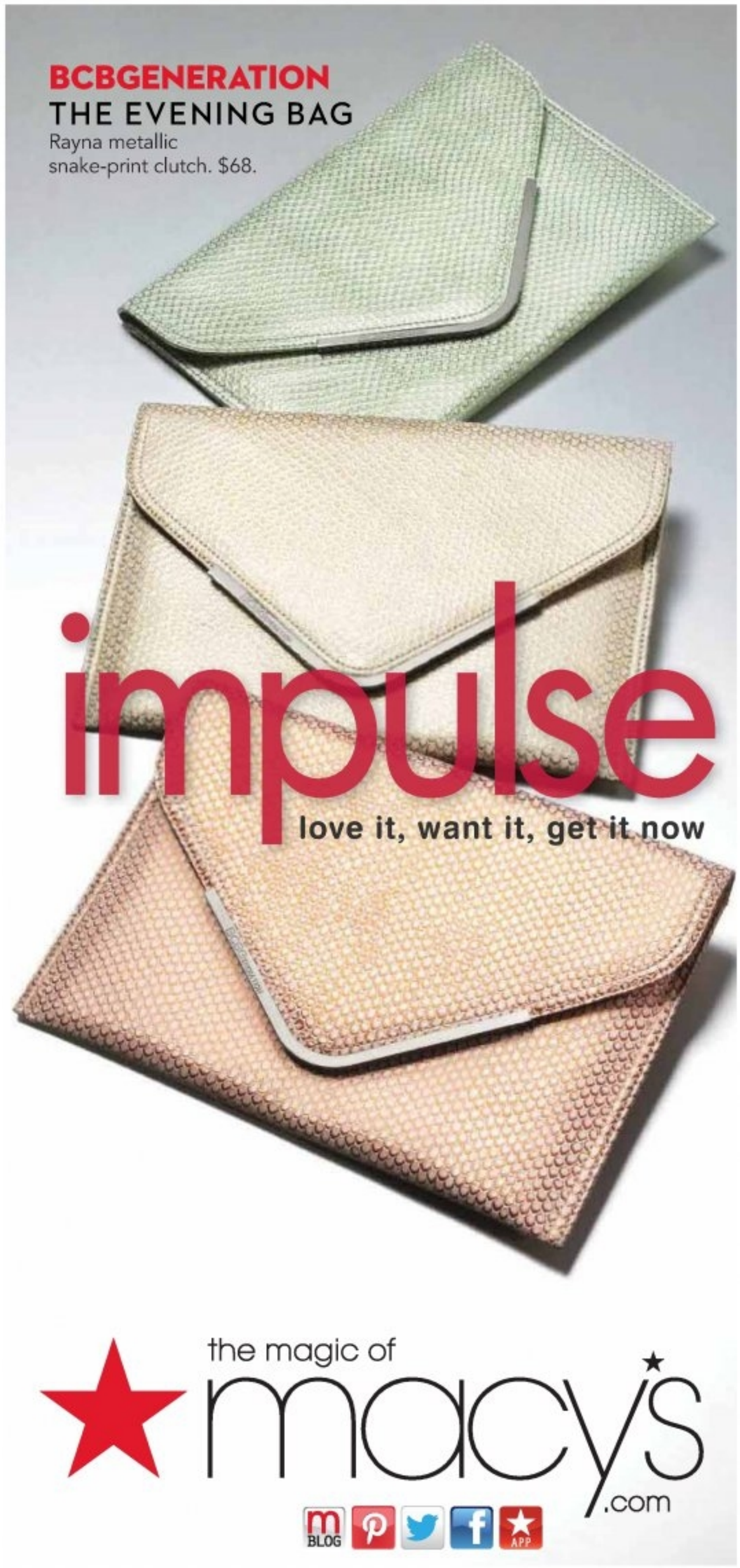
Gillette's nationwide "Kiss and Tell" social experiment, which kicked off Jan. 16 in New York City and Los Angeles, asked Boston boys to pucker up — then lather up, shave, and pucker up again — so the company could get feedback from their ladies.

"Research shows that people are kissing less than ever and that one in three women has avoided kissing a guy because he had facial hair," a Gillette spokesperson said. "With Valentine's Day on the horizon and signs showing that the kissing may be on the decline, Gillette is asking couples across America to help determine if stubble could be the trouble." METRO/MR

58% Of men think women "like the feel" of facial hair

60% Of men may have sensitive skin

76% Of men think women find facial hair sexy



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In the news

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Overweight baby boomers

Study finds baby boomers less healthy than parents' generation

Baby boomers have more chronic illness and disability than their parents, as their sedentary habits and expanding girth offset the modern medicine that enables them to live longer, a study said.

Baby boomers, the 78 million Americans born from 1946 through 1964, engage in less physical activity, are more overweight and have higher rates of hypertension and high cholesterol, according to a study released yesterday in JAMA Internal Medicine.

The study, among the first to compare the generations, shows that baby boomers aren't as healthy and active as most would believe, said Dana E. King, the lead author. They become sicker earlier in life than the previous generation. **BLOOMBERG**

US set up secret drone base in Saudi Arabia: Reports

The United States is operating a secret base out of Saudi Arabia and used it to launch a CIA drone strike in 2011 that killed U.S.-born al Qaeda leader Anwar al-Awlaki, according to a media report.

The Washington Post, in a report yesterday, said the Middle East base was set up two years ago as part of U.S. officials effort to ramp up its search for members of the militant group.

Representatives for the CIA declined to comment on the report. **REUTERS**

Christie slams doctor who said he could die in office

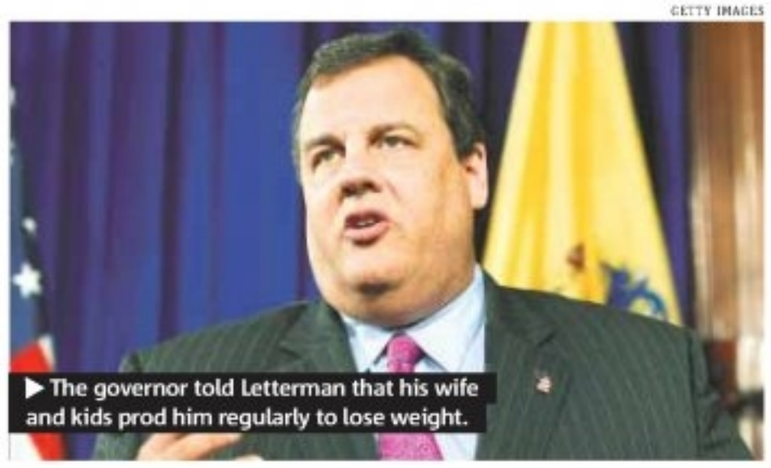
New Jersey Governor Chris Christie called a former White House doctor who said he was dangerously overweight a "hack" and said she should "shut up" unless she examines him.

Christie was responding to a CNN report that Connie Mariano, who worked for former President Bill Clinton, said she was worried that the governor may have a heart attack or stroke. "I'm worried about this man dying in office," she said in the interview.

"You don't have to be a doctor to see that he is obese," Mariano said yesterday by telephone from her office, the Center for Executive Medicine in Scottsdale, Ariz. "I'm not a hack. If you look up my resume, I've been in the White House for nine years. I'm a retired Navy rear admiral. I'm board-certified in internal medicine."

"I find it fascinating that a doctor in Arizona — who's never met me, never examined me, never reviewed my medical history or records and knows nothing about my family history — could make a diagnosis from 2,400 miles away," Christie said in Sea Girt. **REUTERS**

GETTY IMAGES



▶ The governor told Letterman that his wife and kids prod him regularly to lose weight.

Chris Christie on dieting

"Every week, every month, every year, there's a plan. ... Sometimes periods of great success are followed by periods of great failure."

Doughnut joke

Christie has said his weight doesn't slow him and shouldn't bar him from seeking the presidency.

During a Feb. 4 appearance on CBS Corp.'s "Late Show with David Letterman," the governor said that his cholesterol and blood-sugar levels were both within normal ranges during a physical exam ahead of his 50th birthday in September.

"I'm basically the healthiest fat guy you've ever seen in your life," he told the comedian, who replied that he should make it the slogan for his reelection campaign.

Your problems may be Varicose Veins!

Take 2 minute to answer a few questions, it may improve the quality of your health

☑ *Check all boxes that apply to you*

- *Do you have leg heaviness or ache?* ☐
- *Do your legs burn, tingle or itch?* ☐
- *Do you have swelling in your legs or ankles?* ☐
- *Do you have skin discoloration on your legs or ankles (Blue/Brown)?* ☐
- *Is the skin on your legs red and dry?* ☐
- *Do you experience cramps in your legs, especially at nights?* ☐
- *Do you have non-healing wounds in your ankle areas?* ☐
- *Do you have spider veins on your legs and/or ankles?* ☐
- *Do the veins in your legs appear very dark blue or purple?* ☐
- *Is the pain in your legs worse after sitting or standing a long period of time?* ☐
- *Did you any of your parents or grandparents have varicose veins?* ☐
- *Do you have restless legs?* ☐

If you have checked one or more of the boxes, please do yourself a favor and call USA Vein Clinics.

Do Not Postpone Treatment

Varicose veins can start out as a seemingly small problem, but left untreated, can become much more serious. Complications of varicose veins may include ulcers. These may form on the skin near the affected veins, particularly near the ankles. They are caused by fluid build-up in the dysfunctional veins, and can be extremely painful.

Dysfunctional veins can also increase the risk of blood clots. Patients may experience a swelling in the leg, which may indicate a blood clot. Left untreated, these clots can travel through the bloodstream and lodge near the heart or lungs, causing potentially life-threatening health problems.

If you have already decided you'd like to receive vein treatments or would like to get a diagnosis, simply schedule an appointment with USA Vein Clinics today by calling

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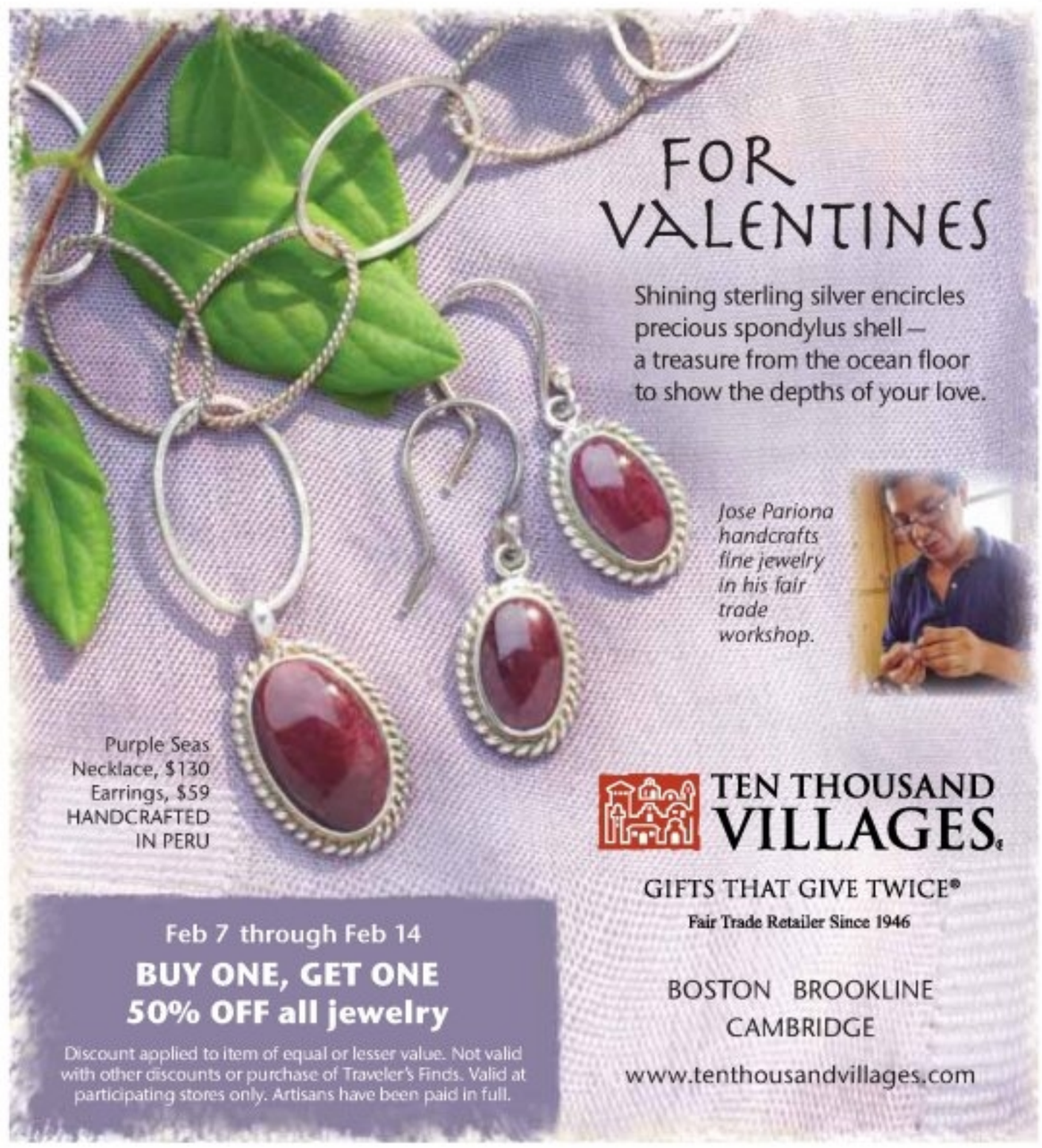
http://www.usaveinclinics.com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RBS fined $600M for rate rigging

Britain's Royal Bank of Scotland was fined $612 million as regulators punished a third bank and warned of more to come in a global investigation into the rigging of benchmark interest rates.

RBS said yesterday it was cutting bonuses to help pay for the fine, in a bid to avoid a public backlash.

The bank fears the scandal will embolden critics who want it to further shrink its profitable investment bank and focus on basic lending at home. "What happened at RBS and other banks is totally unacceptable," Britain's Finance Minister George Osborne told reporters. Britain's Financial Services Authority signaled more large fines were in the offing. **REUTERS**

82%

RBS is mostly owned by the state after the world's costliest bank bailout in 2008.

24

THE DAY'S NEWS AT A GLANCE

Inauguration flag — made in Belgium?

When President Barack Obama was sworn in for his second term on Jan. 21, it's a decent bet that at least one of the flags fluttering behind him was made in Belgium. The Waelkens flag company, based in the small town of Oostrozebeke in Flanders, supplies around 2,000 flags a year to the United States, with clients including the Pentagon and other departments as well as the U.N. **REUTERS**

Boy Scouts delay vote on gay ban

The Boy Scouts of America yesterday delayed until May a vote on whether to end a controversial ban on gay members, drawing praise and rebukes from the two sides of a heated debate that has drawn in politicians as well as parents.

Board members for the youth organization, which turns 103 tomorrow, had been expected to vote on the matter at a meeting yesterday. The Boy Scouts upheld the ban just last year amid sharp criticism from gay-rights groups.

▶ Is the BSA ban on gay members also cast in stone?

The national executive board, which lists more than 70 members, has been meeting privately since Monday at a hotel near Boy Scouts headquarters in Irving, Texas. **REUTERS**

Search for bombs at Alabama siege site

Bomb technicians searched for explosive devices yesterday after two were found at the rural Alabama property where a man, who had held a young boy hostage in an underground bunker for nearly a week, was killed in a firefight with authorities Monday.

Investigators dismantled two explosive devices that were found two days ago at the scene near Midland City in southeast Alabama, the Federal Bureau of Investigation said.

One device was inside the bunker where Jimmy Lee Dykes, 65, had holed up for nearly a week with a 5-year-old boy he had randomly snatched off a school bus after killing the driver. The second device was in a plastic pipe Dykes had asked negotiators to use to communicate with him during the standoff. **REUTERS**

Saturday mail deliveries to end

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

▶ Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night ... but Saturdays are a problem.

The Postal Service plans to drop Saturday delivery of first-class mail by August in its latest effort to cut costs after losing nearly $16 billion last fiscal year, the cash-strapped mail agency said yesterday.

The plan would save about $2 billion a year, the Postal Service said. The mail agency will still deliver packages six days a week and will not change post-office operating hours.

The Postal Service has been losing billions of dollars each year as it grapples with massive payments for future retiree health benefits and as Americans increasingly rely on online communications that drive down mail volumes.

The agency has been seeking congressional approval to get relief from those prepayments and for a larger restructuring to reduce costs. **REUTERS**

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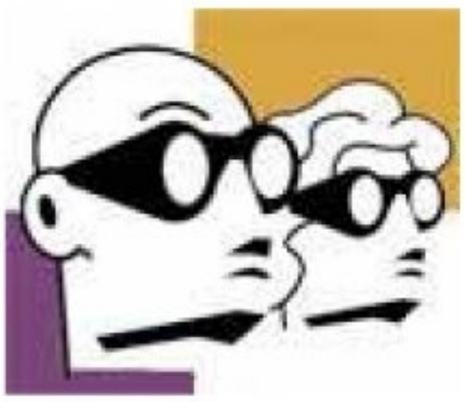

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THE WORD

Metro's **Dorothy Robinson** shares her take on the world of gossip @dorothyatmetro dorothy.robinson@metro.us

The ugly Beyonce photo controversy

On Monday, Buzzfeed published "The 33 Fiercest Moments From **Beyonce**'s Halftime Show" which, as the title entails, included photos of Bey looking like the warrior princess she is. The problem? Apparently Beyonce and her team found some of the pictures unflattering and e-mailed the site to have them take them down as God forbid Beyonce ever looks unattractive. The e-mail from her publicist read, "Thanks for taking my call. As discussed, there are some unflattering photos on your current feed that we are respectfully asking you to change. I am certain that you will be able to find some better photos."

The Word is reprinting some of the photos here. As you can see, they aren't the best — but how in the world could a few bad shots of Beyonce ruin her stature as an icon? They are merely drops in the ocean of Beyonce imagery that saturate our day-to-day lives. Faces make faces, especially when you're performing as hard as she did on Sunday night. If anything, it's nice to know that she's actually a human and not some leather-clad robot created by the Knowles family to make all women feel terrible about themselves.

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Beyonce's face makes faces. Get over it.

Brand won't sink to that level over ex-Perry

This column is full of celebrities trash-talking one another (have I mentioned yet how much I loathe the feud between **Brandi Glanville** and **LeAnn Rimes**? I feel like I need to talk to a therapist just from reading Glanville's Twitter feed. They are both so awful). So it's refreshing to report to you one celebrity who won't go in the gutter — and he's a former heroin addict. Go figure. During a recent visit to **Howard Stern**'s radio show, **Russell Brand** got the chance to criticize ex-wife **Katy Perry** for dating **John Mayer**, but he didn't take it. "Doesn't she know that he's a worse womanizer than you?" Stern asked, to which Brand joked, "Worse or better, depending on how you view it." But Stern's prodding didn't producer any naysaying. "So help me God, Howard Stern, I will not compromise my ex-wife's vagina for the sake of ratings," Brand declared. "That woman was perfect from top to bottom." As for Brand's own love life, "I'm not dating anybody. Actually, I'd like a romance," he says. "Not so much playing the field, just going through life, meditating, doing yoga, concentrating on this TV show and trying to find a nice wife."

▶ Brand. Class act.

The feed ...

▶ Checking in with some of Hollywood's biggest names to see what they've been up to — in their own words, in 140 characters or fewer.

Today, Carrie Underwood wants some common courtesy in the air, Michelle Trachtenberg watches a lot of TV and Edward Burns is nursing himself back to health.

@carrieunderwood
A note to fellow air travelers: if you must talk SO loud, PLEASE keep the cursing to a minimum. We can't get away from you.

@RealMichelleT
Rules of Law & Order: if someone says, "There was this one guy.....". It's ALWAYS that guy.

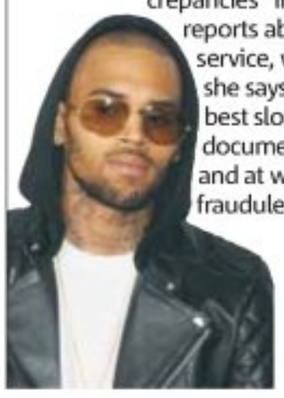
@edward_burns
Feeling better. Flu subsiding. Getting back into bed with Scorsese. Taxi Driver this afternoon. Departed up next.

Trachtenberg

Talking points

Brown to redo community service

Chris Brown may have to start his community service all over again now that a Los Angeles District Attorney is alleging the singer failed to provide "credible, competent or verifiable evidence" that he fulfilled his obligation, according to the Los Angeles Times. Brown was given 180 days of community service as part of his sentence for assaulting Rihanna in 2009, and he was granted permission to complete it in his home state of Virginia. But now **D.A. Mary Murray** claims there are "significant discrepancies" in the reports about his service, which she says are "at best sloppy documentation and at worst fraudulent reporting." Brown's lawyer, **Mark Geragos**, is promising to fight back, though. "Apparently the district attorney's office has completely lost their minds," he tells the newspaper.



Spears heads to Las Vegas

Her engagement may be off and her time on "The X Factor" may be over, but **Britney Spears** still has something to look forward to: The singer is reportedly close to finalizing a deal to perform a series of concerts at a Las Vegas hotel, according to E! News. "We are in deep negotiations and I'd be shocked if it didn't happen," Spears' manager, **Larry Rudolph**, says.

Fieri kicked out of Super Bowl party

Celebrity chef **Guy Fieri** didn't have such a great time when he hit Louisiana for the Super Bowl. When Fieri was reportedly denied access to the VIP area at a pre-Bowl bash at Second Line Studio, "he threw a fit and was kicked out," a source tells Us Weekly. "He caused a total scene. He didn't have the right bracelet, and nobody in New Orleans knows who anyone is."

It's 2006 again

1: Ladies and gentlemen, we present to you a reunited **Fall Out Boy**. **Pete Wentz** (sans guyliner) and co. resurfaced at Elvis Duran and the Morning Show in NYC yesterday.

3: Josh Duhamel and wife **Fergie** struck a happy pose at the after-party for the premiere of his new film, "Safe Haven," Tuesday in Hollywood.

4: Ginnifer Goodwin sung the praises of Listerine at an event for the brand Tuesday in NYC.

5: Our favorite motion capture actor **Andy Serkis** popped up at the Visual Effects Society Awards Tuesday in Beverly Hills.

6: Here's **Al Gore** doing his best seated "Gangnam Style" dance — er, discussing his new book "The Future" — at The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library And Museum in Boston yesterday.

2 Vanessa Hudgens was a vision in black at the launch of the new Johnvarvatos.com Tuesday in NYC.

1: ROBIN MARCHANT/GETTY
2: MIKE COPPOLA/GETTY
3: ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ/GETTY
4: JEBRITT CLARK/GETTY
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COMING BACK TO 'COMMUNITY'

As Season 4 premieres tonight, the cast of NBC's much-beleaguered oddball comedy reflect on the show's dramatic changes

NBC UNIVERSAL

Jim Rash and Joel McHale on the set of "Community."

The cast of "Community" was deep into filming the show's fourth season, but they couldn't shake the feeling that something was missing. No, it's not show creator and former showrunner Dan Harmon, who was quite publicly and unhappily removed from his post this past spring after the witty comedy failed for three seasons to take off in the ratings. No, it's the fan interaction that was missing, at least according to star Yvette Nicole Brown.

"We of course feel the loss of Dan, but as far as our day-to-day life of doing a show, it feels the same," she says. "It's usually us making it, and then we have our audience going, 'Yay!' or 'Boo!' And now we kind of course-correct."

NBC first ordered an abbreviated 13-episode fourth season of "Community" and then pushed it off the fall schedule, leaving it in limbo until it was recently announced it would return to audiences in February. But when we visited the set, the cast was already filming the season finale. "I guess you miss the feedback if it were to have started to air, but I feel the episodes are good, so I'm not too worried," says star Joel McHale. "I think it increases the fans' resolve."

The changes have also opened up new opportunities for the cast, particularly for Jim Rash, who plays Dean Pelton. Season 4 finds Rash, who won an Oscar for co-writing last year's "The Descendents," writing an episode himself, an experience that made him "neurotic and freaked out," he says. But McHale says not to believe the modesty. "Winning an Oscar helps," McHale jokes. "He brought the Oscar with him to set. It would be, 'Jim, I don't really understand this line,' and he would hold up the Oscar and go, 'Is that clear? Good.'"

Ned Ehrbar
METRO WORLD NEWS

The Jeff and Dean Show

Who needs writers? "Community" stars Joel McHale and Jim Rash (an Oscar-winning screenwriter) prove in our interview that they'd make a dynamite comedy duo all on their own, often letting serious answers disintegrate into mock-insults and bizarre back-and-forths. Here's a sample:

Metro: What would you say is the strangest fan experience you've had?

Joel McHale: I trying to think. There's inappropriate, but weird? There's never ...

Rash: I sent my sperm to one fan. Is that weird?

McHale: You did?

Rash: She asked so nicely for it.

McHale: That's weird. That is weird. Don't do that again.

Rash: What? I did it in private!

McHale: Well, I guess it's legal.

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TV watch list

'Community'

COMEDY. Back after a too-long hiatus, "Community"'s study group-turned-unlikely friends returns for its fourth year at Greendale. **Season premiere, 8 p.m., NBC**

'Parks and Recreation'

COMEDY. Ann grapples with her own failed relationships as Ben and Leslie's wedding planning propels forward. **8:30 p.m., NBC**

GILBERT CARRASQUILLO/FILMMAGIC

Tim Gunn and model Heidi Klum

'Law on the Border'

REALITY. K-9 units in Nogales, Ariz., go up against drug cartels on the Mexican-American border. **6 p.m., Animal Planet**

'Project Runway'

REALITY. It's not hard to see why this competitive fashion design series is on its 11th season. Tune in for glitz, drama and sass. **9 p.m., Lifetime**

'Totally Biased With W. Kamau Bell'

COMEDY. Stand-up W. Kamau Bell shares his slanted perspective on the news of the day. **11 p.m., FX**

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Putting the fun in dysfunction

SpeakEasy's 'Other Desert Cities' finds humorous ways of dealing with the darkest of family matters

CRAIG BAILEY/PERSPECTIVE PHOTO

Karen MacDonald, left, and Anne Gottlieb shine in "Other Desert Cities."

"Other Desert Cities" is a refreshingly witty, heartfelt tale of familial dysfunction at Christmastime. Playwright Jon Robin Baitz reinvigorates the threadbare concept of a troubled family with intrigue and drama that has nothing to do with the usual tropes of sexual secrets or infidelity.

Director Scott Edmiston finds a balance between love and hate for the Wyeths in the SpeakEasy Stage Company's uproariously funny, emotionally charged production.

At the center of this maelstrom of misguided affections are mother Polly and adult daughter Brooke, played brilliantly by Karen MacDonald and Anne Gottlieb, respectively. The back and forth of the duo's thinly veiled, caustic barbs feels like a blistering game of passive-aggressive ping-pong.

Initially, you can't help but root for Brooke against her infuriatingly conservative, well-heeled mother. But as the story unfolds — and Gottlieb, with masterful subtlety, reveals a multitude of unforeseen layers to Brooke's personality — the bitchfest morphs into an emotional tug-of-war, with the audience in the middle.

Though alliances are shaken and lives may ultimately be shattered, it's always clear that Brooke is daddy's girl in the eyes of her father (a stellar Munson Hicks). She also has her wildly eccentric, fresh-out-of-rehab aunt (hilariously portrayed by Nancy E. Carroll) in her corner. Her brother (affably played by Christopher Smith) has allegiances to both women, but is the only one who maintains a safe, healthy distance from the family.

The point of contention is the way in which family members deal with the long-ago suicide of the firstborn son. As the truth unfolds, the pain and anguish grow exponentially. But in the end, the family secret trumps all else.

Nick Dussault
nick.dussault@metro.us

If you go

'Other Desert Cities'
Through Saturday
Calderwood Pavilion
BCA 539 Tremont St., Boston
$25-$52, 617-933-8600
www.speakeasystage.com

Plot points

As the Wyeth family gathers for Christmas in Palm Springs, daughter Brooke reveals that her latest book is a memoir about the suicide of her older brother. This news forces the family to address some truths they'd buried long ago.

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fashion week preview

The seven habits of highly effective Jason Wu

We chat about dressing the first lady and how Wu went from admiring supermodels in Vogue as a 9-year-old to hiring them for ad campaigns

How has your New Year gone so far? Jason Wu has already created a second inauguration dress, announced plans to launch a makeup line and designed a new ready-to-wear collection. In many ways, the 30-year-old is the unintentional embodiment of the self-help world's most famous book, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." He taught himself English through American fashion magazines, started a women's wear company with his own savings during a recession and wound up dressing the first lady. In the run-up to his New York Fashion Week show, we chat about Michelle Obama and how he went from admiring supermodels in Vogue as a Mandarin-speaking nine-year-old to hiring them for his ad campaigns.

There was a rumor circulating on Twitter that your first words in English were Stephanie Seymour, who now stars in your ad campaign. Is that true?

Not quite, but it might as well be. [Laughs] When I first moved to Canada from Taiwan, I didn't speak a lick of English. I grew up speaking Mandarin. So I learned the language by reading my mom's fashion magazines. I was never the best 'A' student in school. I learned by applying what I loved. One day I was talking to my aunt, who also had a lot of fashion magazines, and I pointed out Stephanie Seymour. She was like, 'How do you know who Stephanie is?' Fashion seems to be this impenetrable industry. But for me to be able to get to where I am speaks to how many opportunities there are.

What were you doing in the exact moment when you saw Michelle Obama in her second inauguration gown?

My staff and I were working because I have my show coming up. We were live-streaming it on my computers, and no one wanted to talk about it so as not to jinx it. But when we saw her, we just all let out this scream. When I first did this four years ago, I had four employees. But this year, I had 30 to celebrate with.

In a way, that's a very clear example of the effect she's had on the fashion industry.

People say, "Why is it such a big deal that Michelle Obama wore a green dress the other day?" Usually it's the president talking with the first lady standing by his side. But it says something about the power of fashion that Michelle has been able to silently communicate things. For example, she speaks volumes just through the nationality of the designer she chooses. I don't think there has been any other woman who has used fashion to that effect.

Kenya Hunt
METRO WORLD NEWS

Q&A

What can you tell us about your upcoming collection?

I've been working on being more confident in what I do to create real signatures. So there's going to be a lot of signature Wu-ism that people have come to know me for, taken to another level. That's the whole part of brand-building, to drive the point home every time you do anything. Naturally, I feel like I've grown up some.

COURTESY OF JASON WU

Three of Wu's effective habits

- **"I wake up every day at 8 a.m. and am at work at 9.** I pretty much keep the same schedule. I just never know when I'm going to get home. I always joke that I should just install a shower here in my office."
- **"The more I take care of myself, the better my work will be.** I work out, but during show time in winter my workout schedule could be better."
- **"I like to stay calm and organized.** If you were to come backstage to my show before it starts, you'd see a calm environment that contradicts the stereotypical idea of Fashion Week backstage with the models running around with one shoe on and curlers in their hair."

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Loose Saggy Neck Skin – Can Any Cream Cure Turkey Neck?

DEAR DORRIS: I'm a woman who is 64 years young who suffers from really loose skin under my chin and on my lower neck. I hate the term, but my grandkids say I have "turkey neck" and frankly, I've had enough of it!

I have tried some creams designed to help tighten and firm that loose, saggy skin, but they did not work. Is there any cream out there that can truly help my loose neck skin?

Turkey Neck, Boston, MA

DEAR TURKEY-NECK: In fact, there is a very potent cream on the market that firms, tightens and regenerates new skin cells on the neck area. It is called the **Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream®.** This cream contains an instant lift ingredient that tightens the skin naturally, as well as deep moisturizing ingredients to firm the skin and make it more supple. Amazingly, the **Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream®** also has Stem Cells taken from Malus Domesticus, a special apple from Switzerland.

These stem cells are actually unprogrammed cells that can mimic those of young skin that stays tight, firm and wrinkle free. As an alternative to the scary surgeries or face lifts that many people resort to, this cream really packs a big punch on the loose saggy skin of the neck.

The Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream® is available online at **Dermagist.com** or you can order or learn more by calling toll-free, **888-771-5355.** Oh, I almost forgot… I was given a promo code when I placed my order that gave me **10% off.** The code was "**BOSN1**. It's worth a try to see if it still work.

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mydating

As Valentine's Day approaches, give it up for your buddies

FEELARD

▶ Your pals deserve some props this Valentine's Day.

The Hookup

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This Valentine's Day, as you're bombarded with all things pink, pre fixe dinners and expectations about what you should or shouldn't do, I'd like to divert your attention to something else: your friends. If Valentine's Day is truly about recognizing love, then we can't neglect this aspect of our lives.

While the idea that friendships are important may seem obvious, I'd like to challenge you to assess where this priority actually falls on your overall to-do list. When setting life goals, we resolve to work hard, "get ahead," stay in shape, find that special someone, keep that special someone or start a family. But having good friendships belong on that list too.

Having more or better friendships probably gets knocked off by things that seem "more important" because we tend not to look at friendships as "adult" priorities. As long as we can check off the "have friends" box to prove we're not losers, that can feel good enough. It may not hit us as a pressing matter if our friends aren't actually that supportive, interesting or fun — or if we've neglected to spend quality time with them, be there for them or stay up to speed on their lives.

But just checking off the box isn't enough. More than simply "having friends," if we want to be truly fulfilled we need to actually be in our friendships. Put simply, here is what that means: Make time for the friends you adore. Stay present when you're with them, and be willing to be vulnerable and express your true feelings. If they piss you off, don't talk crap behind their backs; express your grievances to their faces — I know that's a scary thought, but I promise getting through it will only make your relationships better.

We spend so much energy trying to find "the one," buying books and reading columns about how to attract this person, hold their interest and build a quality relationship. But this relationship isn't the only one that matters. And over this next week, when the hearts and cupids are inescapable, I'd like to encourage you to keep that in mind.

*— **Amber Madison** is a Manhattan-based relationship expert and dating coach. She is the author of "Are All Guys Assholes?" for which she traveled the country, spoke to over 1,000 men and discovered that the answer to this question is no. You can follow her on Twitter @ambermadi or online at www.ambermadisononline.com*

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The report

MASSACHUSETTS

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MAINE

Sunday River Ski Resort
www.sundayriver.com
Summit Elevation: 3,140 ft.
Vertical Drop: 2,340 ft.
Skiable Area: 667 acres
Number of Lifts: 16
Number of Trails: 132
Longest Run: 15,840 ft.
Sunday River is proud to host White Out Weekend this Thursday through Sunday in association with The OutRyders, New England's largest GLBTQ ski and snowboard club, and the DownEast Pride Alliance. White Out Weekend (WOW) is all about stellar skiing and riding with friends, plus events, parties and more. This year's Peak Party theme is Mardi Gras.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Loon Mountain
www.loonmtn.com
Summit Elevation: 3,050 ft.
Vertical Drop: 2,100 ft.
Skiable Area: 370 acres
Number of Lifts: 12
Number of Trails: 60
Longest Run: 13,200 ft
New to Loon, Saturday's Video Games is an interactive snowboarding and skiing event where a team will compete in a filming and editing contest. The first part of the mountain, the teams compete on a specific set-up, and for the second half of the day they can cruise the other parks using their creativity through the whole day. There will be an editing workshop available, and at the end of the day everyone gets to show off their movie.

Vermont

▶ Ice-skating is just one of the many activities offered at Okemo's Lovin' Ludlow Winter Carnival.

Okemo Mountain Resort

www.okemo.com
Base Elevation: 1,144 ft.
Summit Elevation: 3,344 ft.
Vertical Drop: 2,200 ft.
Skiable Area: 632 acres
Number of Lifts: 19
Number of Trails: 119
Longest Run: 23,760 ft.
This weekend's third annual Lovin' Ludlow Winter Carnival promises to be the most blissful and fun one yet. Packed with exciting and festive events for all ages, it's no wonder why Lovin' Ludlow is Vermont's most talked about Winter Carnival. Enjoy sensational displays of jaw-dropping snow sculptures, entertaining scavenger hunts (with prizes), kids' fun races, a family fun race, exhilarating downhill sledding, Warren Miller film festival, wine tastings, ice-skating, ski and snowboard fashion show, Texas hold 'em poker tournament, ugly-sweater contest with prizes, blazing bonfire with fireworks, Chowda' Challenge, scrapbooking and more.

Cranmore Mountain Resort
www.cranmore.com
Summit Elevation: 2,000 ft.
Vertical Drop: 1,500 ft.
Skiable Area: 200 acres
Number of Lifts: 10
Number of Trails: 54
Longest Run: 5,280 ft.
Cranmore on Sunday will hold the 36th annual Hope on the Slopes Race to Beat Cancer. Whether you're a recreation skier, a snowboarder, a downhill racer, a tubing enthusiast or just want to help in the fight against cancer, you can join this meaningful and inspiring event. The minimum contribution of $75 per racer includes a full day lift ticket or two-hour tubing pass, coffee supplied by Good Vibes Coffee Roasters and lunch provided by Flatbread Company. All of the event proceeds are used by the American Cancer Society to fund cancer research.

Cannon Mountain
www.cannonmt.com
Summit Elevation: 4,080 ft.
Vertical Drop: 2,180 ft.
Skiable Area: 264 acres
Number of Lifts: 9
Number of Trails: 72
Longest Run: 12,144 ft.
Cannon will hold the American Heart Association Red Dress Day on Saturday. February is National Heart Health Month, and Cannon will be supporting the cause by trying to break the world record by assembling the largest human-made red dress on the snow. The American Heart Association team will be on-site, and you'll have a chance to win a Blu-ray player just for signing up. Don't forget to wear red!

VERMONT

Mount Snow
www.mountsnow.com
Summit Elevation: 3,600 ft.
Vertical Drop: 1,700 ft.
Skiable Area: 588 acres
Number of Lifts: 20
Number of Trails: 80
Longest Run: 13,200 ft.
Join Mount Snow as it transforms into Bourbon Street for an entire weekend of fun starting Saturday. There will be fun Bud Light-sponsored Apres Ski parties going on at each bar, as well as the Bud Light Concert Series at the Snowbarn, featuring I-Ganic Sound System on Friday night and Bronze Radio Return on Saturday night. Oh, and what would Mardi Gras be without beads? There will be more than 10,000 to give away in lift lines, lodges, parties and other locations all weekend long. So get out your purple, green and gold and enjoy this epic weekend.

myletters&games

Letters

letters@metro.us

Science column sparks renewed interest in world

RE: "A WAY TO BE HAPPIER" (METRO, FEB. 4) I love columnist Justin Dowd's Weird Science column and I look forward to reading it. He always writes about something interesting — so interesting, I read his column in the morning and then spend my lunch hour on the Internet looking for more information. Whether it's spindles in a whale's brain or looking up Good Think Inc., it's always something! I want him to know he touches me and inspires me.

BEVERLY HUGHES, VIA E-MAIL

Jesus Christ and the superstars: A trend worth celebrating

RE: "MEET THE HOT, NEW HOLLYWOOD MEET-UP: JESUS" (METRO, FEB. 6) The news that some celebs are going to a Bible study is the best I've heard in a long time! Coming from a 27-year-old Lutheran, which is a rare breed these days, I am thrilled that celebrities are publically showing interest in something other than expensive cars, luxurious island vacations and each other.

While Christians and those of other religions are consistently portrayed on TV, news and movies as hardheaded, bigoted, crazy fundamentalists, it would be so refreshing if those in the public spotlight would embrace the good parts of religion — i.e., loving your neighbor (who is really every human being), and loving someone bigger than yourself.

ANNIE FERRIS, VIA E-MAIL

Leave the Teflon to the cooking pots

RE: "DON'T SHOOT YOUR MOUTH OFF UNLESS YOU KNOW ALL THE TERMS" (METRO, FEB. 6) An assault weapon is one that is easy for the infantry to carry and can repeatedly kill many people. That kind of weapon didn't exist in the 1700s. Cop-killer bullets are well known. They are Teflon-coated and can penetrate many types of vests.

Human societies govern themselves. The Constitution gives us the right to do that by vote. We have a right to address and balance needs for safety, hunting, self-defense and police work. Letter writer Moe Priell has a right to "determine what I need," but he's not the only one. We aren't anti-gun. We just want to maintain a little safety.

HARRY THORN, VIA E-MAIL

Quoted

"Frankly, at 61 I kind of stopped trying to learn new things. But now I'm looking at 2013 as a year to reinvent myself and Justin is one of the reasons why."

HUGHES

E-mail your letters: **letters@metro.us**

Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words.
Metro reserves the right to edit all letters.
Please include your name and contact information.

Did you know?

According to ATF.gov, armor-piercing rounds are:

A projectile or projectile core which may be used in a handgun and which is constructed entirely ... from one or a combination of tungsten alloys, steel, iron, brass, bronze, beryllium copper or depleted uranium.

Horoscope

♒ Aquarius **Jan. 20-Feb. 19.** Even though you're usually outgoing and friendly in all your relationships, today you could be a bit withdrawn. Come out of the shadows; you'll have more fun mixing it up.

♓ Pisces **Feb. 20-March 20.** View your expectations realistically but hopefully, because making them realities is within the realm of possibility. Practical goals are definitely achievable.

♈ Aries **March 21-April 19.** The possibility of you being an excellent achiever is better than usual, so take on something that is especially important. You'll do a great job handling it.

♉ Taurus **April 20-May 20.** A painful lesson you learned the hard way will be put to the test. You'll not only avoid making that mistake again, you'll know exactly how to handle things this time around.

♊ Gemini **May 21-June 20.** Financial and commercial involvements are your strong suits. You'll not only recognize a good deal when you see one, you'll know how to make the most of it.

♋ Cancer **June 21-July 22.** The most beneficial involvement you could enter would be some kind of partnership. If each party does his or her best, mutual advantages will result.

♌ Leo **July 23-Aug. 22.** Something you've been trying to accomplish that hasn't worked out thus far can finally be wrapped up if you take a methodical approach.

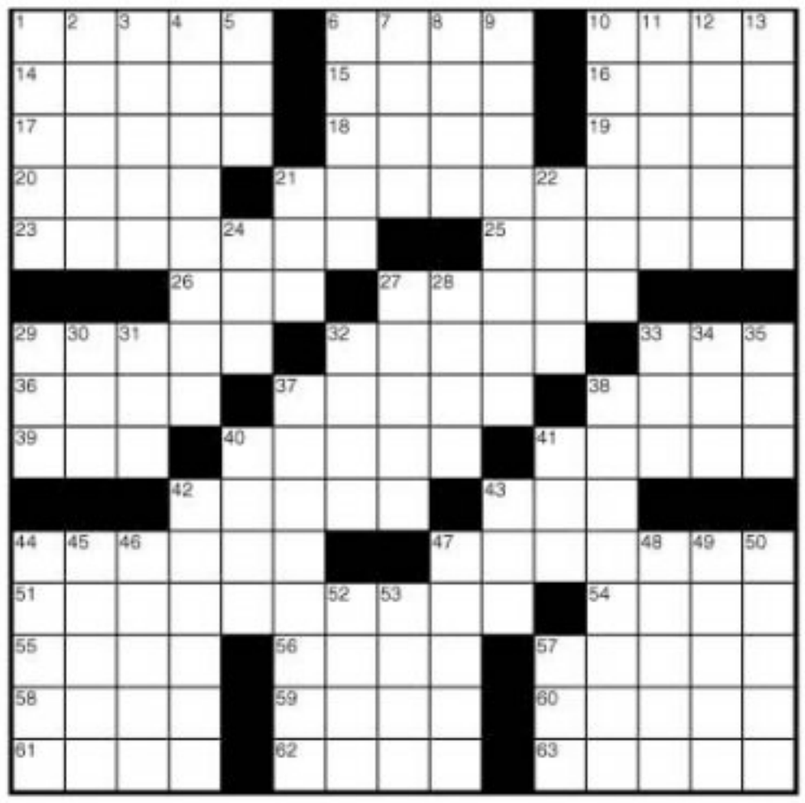
♍ Virgo **Aug. 23-Sept. 22.** Don't be reluctant to take charge of things when you get the chance. You'll be far better at calling the shots than you would be trying to comply with the directives of another.

♎ Libra **Sept. 23-Oct. 23.** It behooves you not to waste any time focusing on frivolous pursuits. Bend your efforts toward addressing your more serious problems, handling the tougher ones first.

♏ Scorpio **Oct. 24-Nov. 22.** Don't beat around the bush when there is a serous issue you need to iron out with another. Get down to basics as quickly as you can, and set your mind upon a resolution.

♐ Sagittarius **Nov. 23-Dec. 21.** The possibility of personal gain looks exceptionally good, even if it won't be earth-shattering. Be alert for different ways you can improve your material circumstances.

♑ Capricorn **Dec. 22-Jan. 19.** Because there is something difficult that has to be taken care of, you'll be the one called upon to get it done. Answer the call of your peers with alacrity and zest. **BERNICE BEDE OSOL**



Across
1 Coming out
6 Sari sporter
10 Gizzard
14 Puts on guard
15 Ever's partner
16 With us now
17 Delete a file
18 — — to win it
19 Peter Gunn's girl
20 Threat ender
21 Overly romantic, maybe (hyph.)
23 From memory (2 wds.)
25 Strong-arms
26 Bad-mouth
27 Host — Philbin
29 Wielded an axe
32 Happen again
33 Large amount
36 Lemony
37 Knight's weapon
38 Layered cookie
39 Keep fit
40 "Ah Sin" playwright
41 Book jacket ad
42 Makes yawn
43 "Get — of that junk!"
44 Half of the biathlon
47 Shrewd
51 They're often rifled (2 wds.)
54 Jumble
55 Sarah — Jewett
56 London district
57 Deep distress
58 Poker holding
59 Adult cygnet
60 Situate
61 Depot info
62 Isle of exile
63 Poisonous snake

Down
1 Dork
2 Far back in time
3 Impudent
4 Lying fallow
5 Mao — -tung
6 "Luck of the Draw" singer
7 — Karenina
8 Film —
9 Conspiracy
10 Twitters
11 Change colors
12 Movie mermaid
13 Lawn spoilers
21 Almost grads
22 Giant slain by Odin
24 Give alms
27 Housing fees
28 Livy's "Lo!"
29 Mecca pilgrimage
30 Environmental prefix
31 Sham locks
32 Hard to find
33 Capote on Broadway
34 Poet's contraction
35 San Francisco hill
37 Generosity
38 Eastern hemisphere (2 wds.)
40 Hagar's daughter
41 Profile
42 Sturgis visitors
43 ER personnel
44 Extent
45 Green-eyed Thai cat
46 Ancient Greek colony
47 Swedish currency
48 Homer opus
49 Sister's girl
50 Errand runner
52 Lower jaw
53 Crazed captain
57 Cum-laude stat

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2		8			4	9	7	
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		7		5			2	9
9			1		7			4
8	2			3		7		
						4		
	7	3	5			6		8
				1	8	2		

SUDOKU **LEVEL: EASY**

		4	7		3			9
3				6		2	5	
			8	1				
	3				7	8	1	
8				4				5
	4	5	6				2	
				7	6			
	6	7		9				8
9			2		8	4		

SUDOKU **LEVEL: HARD**

How to play Sudoku: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Solution to yesterday's crossword

S	P	A	R	T	A	■	D	R	U	■	S	H	E	B
R	U	M	O	R	S	■	R	E	S	■	C	E	P	E
I	N	T	U	I	T	■	E	E	C	■	A	M	O	R
■	■	S	P	I	R	A	L	G	A	L	A	X	Y	■
P	A	G	E	S	■	O	M	S	■	V	I	N	Y	L
A	D	E	S	■	P	C	S	■	Y	E	N	■	■	■
N	A	N	■	Y	U	K	■	C	O	N	G	A	M	E
I	I	I	■	I	R	E	■	H	U	G	■	N	I	B
C	R	I	S	P	E	R	■	E	R	E	■	A	L	B
■	■	A	P	E	■	D	R	S	■	T	I	N	E	■
F	R	A	M	E	■	S	I	U	■	B	U	S	E	D
J	U	M	P	E	R	C	A	B	L	E	S	■	■	■
O	P	A	L	■	U	R	L	■	A	L	K	A	L	I
R	E	N	E	■	T	E	E	■	D	I	E	S	E	L
D	E	A	R	■	H	E	R	■	S	E	D	A	T	E

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HARD-WON 'BATTLES'

Boston band Kingsley Flood are ready for the national stage with their second album Even if they weren't quite ready to record it The band talk distances, genres and lyrics

When Kingsley Flood began recording in Maine this summer, Naseem Khuri had only finished writing four songs for the band's sophomore album. After nine days of laying down tracks and as many nights of sharing whiskey, they emerged with the 12 songs that make up "Battles."

Khuri's confidence in the band's collective creativity is apparent in the resultant music and in conversation with the band. Sitting in their Charlestown rehearsal space, Khuri does most of the talking, but the other five members contribute in the same way that they complement his songs.

"We got into a routine of, in the morning, not touching instruments, just listening to demos and taking notes," says the singer, before violin and sax player Jenee Morgan interjects.

"And harassing Naseem to finish lyrics," she adds.

Khuri did finally finish the lyrics, and to great effect. Though the music is alive with the spontaneity of a band falling in love with new material, the words of "Battles" feel carefully chosen, with recurring themes and characters at crossroads of hard-luck pasts and futures of fading faith.

"I know there's a light, but the tunnel is so hard to find," sings Khuri on "Sigh a While," one of the album's more contemplative tracks. And on "Waiting on the River to Rise," the narrator poignantly questions, "How come everybody for the common man never looks quite like me?"

"I went into the lyrics of the whole thing wanting to sort of tell this story of what happens when you do everything right but still fall behind," explains the singer. "It's just an idea I've been really fascinated with, and you see it all around you. I was doing volunteer work at a shelter, and when I'd talk to people, this always seemed to be a resonant theme. ... What choices do you have? Do you sell out? Do you be a jerk and throw your elbows around?"

Luckily for Kingsley Flood, their second album keeps on rewarding upon repeated listens, which could mean that they might not have to sell out or behave like jerks. As for throwing elbows around, they've already accomplished that with this set of songs.

DAVE GREEN

▶ Kingsley Flood are, from left, Naseem Khuri, Chris Barrett, Nick Balkin, Travis Richter, Jenee Morgan and George Hall.

Better by the gig

Khuri lives in Washington, D.C., while the rest of the band is headquartered in Boston. This means they must never rehearse, right? Wrong.

- **Khuri:** "We go through spurts. I'll come up for a week and then I'll disappear for two weeks."
- **Drummer Travis Richter:** "And then we'll play for six weeks."
- **Bassist Nick Balkin:** "It's kind of like the gigs are the rehearsals."

Pat Healy
pat.healy@metro.us

Americana the beautiful

Kingsley Flood received the Boston Music Award late last year for Best Americana Act, but "Battles" is tougher to pigeonhole than that. The band members don't seem to mind, though.

"There are a lot of roots to what we're doing, but we live and interact with our culture as it happens today," says lead guitarist George Hall.

"We'll probably always be known as Americana, even if we play death metal," says Khuri with a shrug.

Throughout an hour spent with the band, it's evident that its members do in fact interact with their culture. A sampling of the other acts that the members bring up in conversation: Carla Thomas, the Clash, Radiohead, Bob Willis, Sun Ra, King Crimson, the Kinks, Pavement, the Buzzcocks, Wilco, the Grownup Noise, Son of the Sun, Pearl and the Beard.

If you go

Kingsley Flood Album Release Show
With Velah, Air Traffic Controller
Saturday, 8 p.m.
Brighton Music Hall
158 Brighton Ave., Allston
$13, 800-745-3000
www.ticketmaster.com

Concert calendar

On sale soon

- **Old 97's**
  March 11, The Sinclair
  (On sale Friday)
- **Spirit Family Reunion**
  April 5, The Sinclair
  (On sale Friday)
- **Mike Nesmith**
  April 13, Somerville Theatre
  (On sale Friday)
- **Bassnectar**
  April 25-26, House of Blues
  (On sale Friday)
- **The Breeders 'Last Splash' 20th Anniversary Tour**
  May 8, Royale
  (On sale Friday)
- **Vampire Weekend**
  May 15, Agganis Arena
  (On sale Friday)
- **SOJA**
  May 19, House of Blues
  (On sale Friday)
- **Fall Out Boy**
  May 26, House of Blues
  (On sale Friday)
- **Beyonce**
  July 23, TD Garden
  (On sale Monday)
- **Train**
  With The Script, Gavin DeGraw
  July 27, Comcast Center
  (On sale Friday)

Also playing

George Clinton and the Parliament Funkadelic

Friday, 8 p.m.
House of Blues
15 Lansdowne St., Boston
$30-$45, 888-693-2583
www.livenation.com

People say aliens don't exist, but George Clinton's Mothership has been landing repeatedly and abducting millions to implant them with "the funk" since the '70s, so we're skeptical of the skeptics. How can they ignore all the documented cases of Parliament Funkadelic compelling average people to suddenly jump on the dance floor and demand the funk be given up? Think about it.

George Clinton

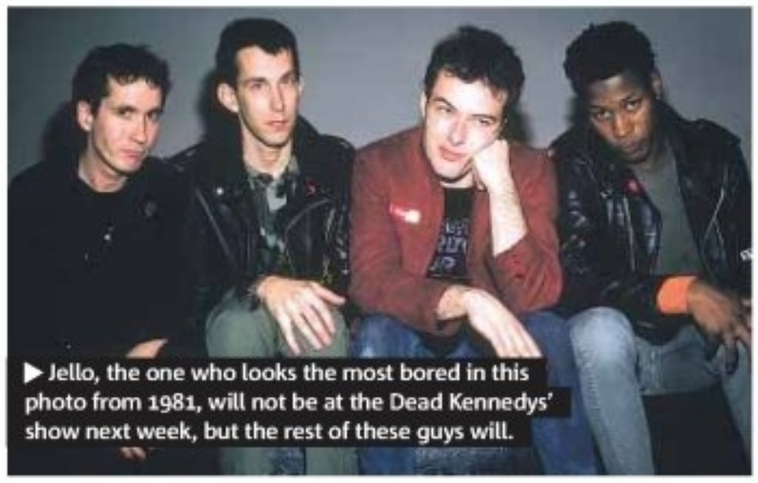
PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

Dead Kennedys

Monday, 8 p.m.
Middle East Downstairs
480 Mass. Ave., Boston
$25, 18+, 617-864-3278
www.mideastclub.com

We miss Jello Biafra, too, but the rest of the classic DK lineup is here, and anyway, let's not forget the indispensable contributions of bassist Klaus Fluoride, drummer D.H. Peligro and especially guitarist East Bay Ray, whose fusion of surf and punk still echoes from the reverb-happy amps of innumerable bands.

MATTHEW DINARO



▶ Jello, the one who looks the most bored in this photo from 1981, will not be at the Dead Kennedys' show next week, but the rest of these guys will.

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Songza

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Boogie in a winter wonderland with the Thin White Duke.

It's cold out, so chill out

During the coldest months of winter, what better way to soothe the chill than with some cozy mellow vibes from the '70s? Shuggie Otis, David Bowie and Roberta Flack — plus a number of lesser-known artists worth hearing — make up the Sophisticated '70s list on Songza.com. Get groovy and check it out at www.songza.com/discover/decades/1970s/sophisticated-70s-TacticCo.

— Songza is a streaming platform that mines years of music history and today's music blogs for the best gems, so you don't have to. The company offers thousands of expertly-curated playlists for free on the Web, iPhone and iPad.

A balanced Empire

▶ New Asian restaurant serves up right-sized portions and knows when to be traditional and when to experiment ▶ Perfect for Chinese New Year

Nosh On

LINDA LABAN
LINDA.LABAN@METRO.US

ERIN BALDASSARI/METRO

▶ Empire chefs whip up a wide array of Asian fusion cuisine at one of the largest additions to date in Boston's Seaport District.

ERIN BALDASSARI/METRO

▶ What an Empire!

Set on the increasingly concrete-congested Fan Pier, Empire Restaurant and Lounge is big, bold and beautiful. Music pumps, lighting is low and its black filigree fittings and Buddha statues say lady of the night meets hippie chic.

Empire's pan-Asian culinary blueprint originates at sister Asian-themed restaurants Shrine, MGM Grand at Foxwoods and Red Lantern on the Back Bay/South End border. Here, it's crafted by stoic chefs in full view in the central open-plan kitchen. Each dish is stylishly presented and accessorized to the max, including gorgeous desserts.

Most of the sushi is voluptuous. Osetra caviar finishes a smoked salmon roll — and more humbly, avocado is bound by nori to sticky rice.

There are Korean and Thai dishes, too, but the menu mostly features riffs on Chinese. Preternaturally white, steamed buns packed with braised shitake have pickled cucumbers that add piquancy to the mushrooms' density. A scallion pancake with lobster meat has a crisp radicchio salad topped with a creamy coconut and lime dressing. Alaskan black cod with a sake soy glaze is a monochromatic marvel with a charcoal-colored exterior wrapping tender white flesh. It sits on wilted bok choy in a delicate white miso sauce flecked with edamame. A fine dice of red pepper adds a flash of color and subtly zaps the flavors with fruitiness. It's a genius touch on a menu that errs on the clever side of ostentation: plenty, but not too much.

If you go

Empire Asian Restaurant & Lounge
Entrees: $21-$49
One Marina Park Drive, Boston
617-295-0001
www.empireboston.com

New Moon Sunday

Celebrations for the Chinese New Year and the Year of the (Female Water) Snake begin with February's New Moon (Feb. 10). Foodies snub non-authentic ethnic food, but what's authentic? Reputedly, Singapore street noodles were developed by Asian Indians in Hong Kong to attract Singapore workers. Empire's is a satisfying winter warmer with shrimp, veggies and char sui pork adding a barbecue flavor twist. Hot peppers give its peppery Madras curry spice a swift boot in the rear.

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the KINSALE Irish Pub & Restaurant
2 Center Plaza, Cambridge St., Boston
617-742-5577
Free validated parking with some restrictions. All TD Banknorth evening events $13.

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†Offer good on new 28-Day Core **and Select Auto-Delivery plans only. Not valid on Basic plan. Pricing varies with plan selected. Free shipping** Continental US only. With this offer you receive an additional discount off the Full Retail Value with each consecutive 28-Day Auto-Delivery order as long as you are on program. With **Auto-Delivery, you are automatically charged and shipped your 28-Day program once every 4 weeks unless you** cancel. You can cancel Auto-Delivery at any time by calling 1-800-727-8046. Other restrictions apply. Call or see website for details. The Nutrisystem Select program is available to Continental U.S. residents only and cannot be shipped to PO Boxes, APO Boxes or military addresses. Cannot be combined with any prior or current discount or offer. Limit one offer per customer. ©2013 Nutrisystem, Inc. All rights reserved. Nutrisystem is allowing customers to lock in 2012 prices on every consecutive 28-Day order delivered while on program. That's a 40% savings on each consecutive 28-Day order while you remain on program.

**Based on a Nutrisystem survey of customers who have been on program two or more months, October 2012.

††If you're not 100% satisfied, call within 14 days of receiving your first 28-Day order and return the remaining non-frozen food to us for a full refund. We'll even cover return shipping. Limit one guarantee per customer.

On Nutrisystem you add in fresh grocery items.

listings

The rundown

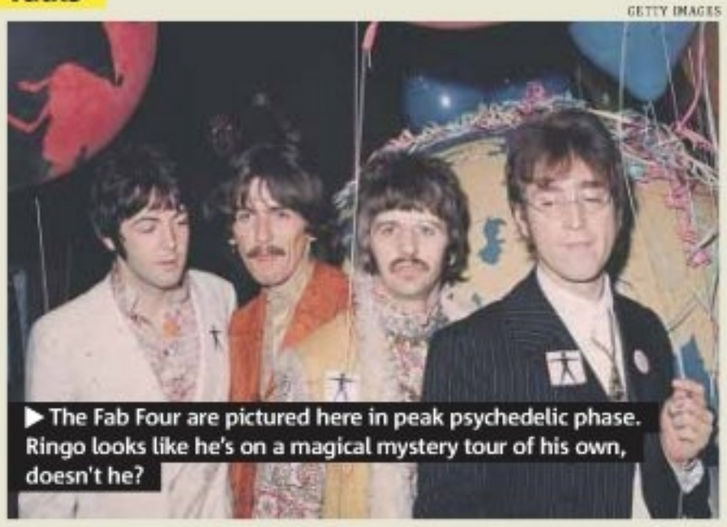
DANCE

Shen Yun Performing Arts
Friday through Sunday
Boston Opera House
539 Washington St., Boston
$50-$150, 888-974-3698
www.shenyunperformingarts.org
Shen Yun is the premiere global ambassador of Chinese classical dance. It's a massive show, with more than 100 dancers, 400 costumes and a 5,000-year timescale. The brilliantly colorful costumes, picture-perfect synchronization and fantastical scenery make it one of the greatest feasts for the eyes you'll see all year. If China was once a "sleeping dragon," we're glad it's woken up.

South Asian Showdown
Saturday, 6 p.m.
John Hancock Hall
180 Berkeley St., Boston
$20-$100, 617-448-2508
www.southasianshowdown.com
South Asian dance teams from across the U.S. will throw down — and up, side-to-side and all around — at this competition, which pits Bollywood-style dance against the eclectic genre of South Asian fusion. With either style, you'll get bombastic energy, thumping music, tightly synchronized routines and campy costumes — just think of it as chicken masala for the soul.

Talks

GETTY IMAGES



▶ The Fab Four are pictured here in peak psychedelic phase. Ringo looks like he's on a magical mystery tour of his own, doesn't he?

Deconstructing Sgt. Pepper

Monday, 7 p.m.
Coolidge Corner Theatre
290 Harvard St., Brookline
$12-$15, 617-734-2500
www.coolidge.org
Beatlemaniacs, recording enthusiasts and anyone interested in the artistic process in general will love this multimedia presentation on the making of "Sgt. Pepper" by composer and producer Scott Freiman, who will go in depth to reveal how the Beatles and George Martin pushed technology and pop-music convention to its absolute limits to create one of modern music's great paradigm-shifting works.

MOVIES

'Monty Python and the Holy Grail'
Sunday, 1 p.m.
Paramount Center
559 Washington St., Boston
$5-$10, 617-824-8400
www.artsemerson.org
There's a certain kind of geeky teenager who just can't stop quoting from this movie. Why? Our guess is that Monty Python's classic skewering of the medieval world has that perfect combination of intelligence and silliness that satisfies that age like nothing else. That kid is somewhere inside you, maybe not far from the surface. Go see this movie with him or her!

ART

'The Written Word'
Saturday through March 1
Blanc Gallery
110 Brookline St., Cambridge
Free, 508-768-7611
www.blancgallery.com
Five artists — Meg Hitchcock, Pat Falco, Jousef Massif, Sarah Rushford and Charley Friedman — come together for this mixed-media exhibit exploring language in art. How do words affect our interpretation? How does our linguistic thought process affect how we interpret anything at all? Does it limit it or expand it? Can words themselves be art?

THEATER

'Legally Dead'
Through Feb. 24
Boston Playwrights' Theatre
949 Comm. Ave., Boston
$10-$30, 866-811-4111
www.bu.edu/bpt
This play involves a train wreck of a family, touched by seemingly every classic touchstone of dysfunction: prison, abandonment, phony religion, alcoholism, grudges and dark secrets. We think it's safe to assume it's a dark comedy. If you have family in town that you don't necessarily have the best relationship with, it might be a good idea to treat them to a double feature of "Legally Dead" and "Other Desert Cities" (see page 11).

OPERA

'Clemency'
Through Sunday
Artists for Humanity EpiCenter
100 W. Second St., Boston
$100, 617-542-6772
www.blo.org
Boston Lyric Opera presents the U.S. premiere of this English-language opera by James MacMillan. Not concerned with pulling any punches, it goes straight to one of the heaviest books ever written for inspiration — the book of Genesis, specifically the story of Abraham and Sarah. It's preceded by a performance of the thematically related Schubert piece "Hagar's Lament."

BOOKS

Roseanne Montillo
Tuesday, 7 p.m.
Brookline Booksmith
279 Harvard St., Brookline
Free, 617-566-6660
www.brooklinebooksmith.com
This author will discuss her new book "The Lady and Her Monsters," which explores the history behind Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein." Many people know the anecdote about Shelley writing the book for a "spooky story" contest among her gloomy friends, but Montillo goes much deeper, showing how "Frankenstein" captured the scientific paranoia of a strange new industrial age. MATTHEW DINARO

Music

▶ The Residents bring their ocular oddity to the ICA next week.

The Residents

Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.
Institute of Contemporary Art
100 Northern Ave., Boston
$35, 617-876-4275
www.worldmusic.org
The Residents are one of the few bands that truly deserve to be called "unique." Landing somewhere between forgotten outskirts of pop culture and the fever dreams of the avant-garde, the anonymous quartet, most of whom wear eyeball masks, create a bafflingly entertaining sideshow experience.

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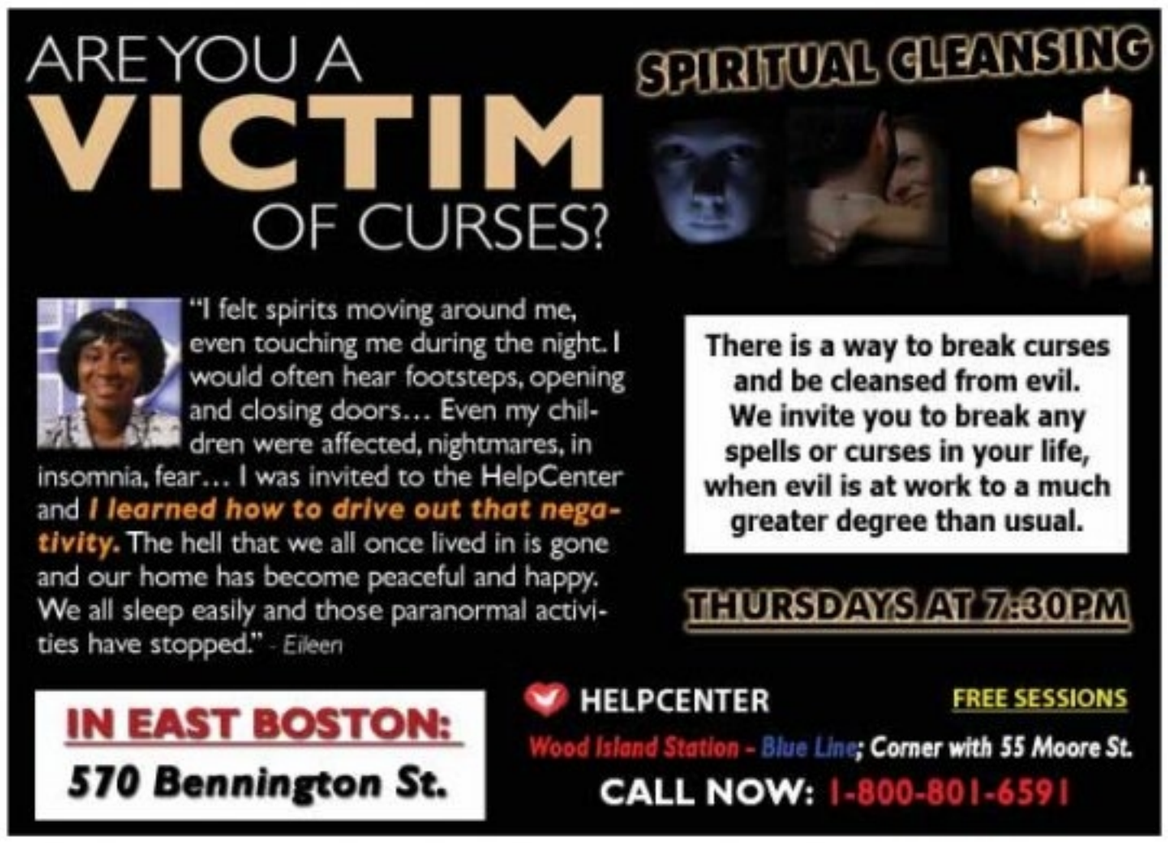
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Sports in brief

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Youkilis

Youkilis, Joba to 'hug out' issues

It appears that Yankees Kevin Youkilis and Joba Chamberlain have buried the hatchet, as "Youk" finally acknowledged his new teammate this week.

Their long-standing feud didn't magically end in December when Youkilis, long one of the main faces on the hated Red Sox, signed with New York to take Alex Rodriguez's spot at third base. Chamberlain was irked in the weeks after the signing, saying he had left a voice message on Youkilis' phone at the time of the signing but that the former rival never responded.

"I did whatever I could. I can't control what Kevin Youkilis does," Chamberlain told the New York Post at the time.

On Tuesday, the Yankees pitcher was singing a different tune.

"He texted me," Chamberlain said. "We'll hug it out. ... I don't want him to have to talk about it. He's gonna have enough to worry about over here. He's really the only acquisition we've made as of now." MATT BURKE

Old rivals looking just plain old on the court

- Despite recent win streaks, Celtics and Lakers have plenty of turmoil
- Winningest franchises in NBA history meet for first time this season

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Paul Pierce will once again be the focus of attention tonight against the Lakers.

For the last five seasons, the Boston Celtics and Los Angeles Lakers have been measured by their losses.

They've split two NBA Finals matchups and have been threats in the postseason each year.

This year is different.

No longer is it a surprise when the Celtics or Lakers lose, but when they actually win a game. Okay, it was also a surprise when the Lakers fired head coach Mike Brown five games into the season.

Regardless, wins have been few and far between for these two longtime rivals from each coast. The C's went into last night's game in Toronto with a 24-23 record, good for eighth in the Eastern Conference.

The Lakers aren't any better. At 23-26, they're not even a playoff team right now — playing catchup to teams like the Blazers, Rockets and Jazz.

And the good news for both teams — that the Celtics were on a four-game winning streak heading into last night and the Lakers have won six of seven — can't even come without major injury news.

You already know about Boston's Rajon Rondo and Jared Sullinger. But the Lakers, too, are dealing with injuries now. Their two redwoods, Dwight Howard and Pau Gasol are banged up. Howard has missed the team's last three games with right-shoulder soreness, and Gasol heard a "pop" in his foot in Tuesday's game against the Nets. It was revealed by CBS Sports yesterday that he will miss up to six weeks of action with a plantar fascia injury.

The injuries to both teams have forced the "old reliable" future Hall of Famers of Paul Pierce, Kevin Garnett and Kobe Bryant to take on even larger roles with their respective teams.

20 L.A.'s Pau Gasol averaged 20 ppg in the last three games but is now expected to be out six weeks with a fascia injury.

In the Lakers' last three games (all wins), Bryant has averaged 18.7 points, 7.7 rebounds and 5.7 assists. While his scoring is down, his rebounds and assists are up, because that's what his team needs.

The same can be said for Pierce, who has taken on a bigger point-forward role after the loss of Rondo. Pierce has averaged 17.3 points, 9.8 rebounds and 6.3 assists in the C's last four games, with the latter two stat categories well above his career averages.

So tonight's game (8 p.m., TNT) isn't a battle between the NBA's best. It's more so a battle between the NBA's bruised but not yet beaten.

Jimmy Toscano
sports@metro.us

In the news

Easy does it

Red Sox slugger David Ortiz expects to be ready for opening day but will ease into spring training as he continues to recover from an injured right Achilles tendon.

"I'm able to do the agility drills without any pain, which I wasn't able to do before," Ortiz told WEEI.com.

Fantasy sports

ADAM LEVITAN
ALEVITAN@METRO.US

BURYING THE LEAD

What do sex, driving and the first round of fantasy baseball drafts all have in common? Safety is a priority.

Unlike other fantasy sports, we can't win our baseball league with our first-round pick. The rosters are too deep and there are too many impact players. However, we can lose it by whiffing. So as we take a look at the Top 10 picks for 2013, be sure to exercise proper precautions.

Real big fish

Do everything you can to get into the top three this season. As long as he's not suspended, **Ryan Braun** will mash 30 homers, steal 25 bases and hit over .300. **Miguel Cabrera** has never missed more than 12 games in a season and has at least 30 jacks in six straight years. **Mike Trout** may look risky, but not when we examine his pedigree and role on top of the Angels' potent offense.

ALL PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

▶ Mike Trout finished as fantasy's No. 1 player last year despite playing in just 139 games.

Meat in middle

A healthy **Matt Kemp** is a good bet to bounce back in the steals department, making him the No. 4 pick. **Albert Pujols** is only 33, so let's not write him off yet. **Robinson Cano**, a healthy **Joey Votto** and **Carlos Gonzalez** are difference-makers without many red flags.

Arms race

In head-to-head formats, the ability to "stream" for wins and strikeouts crushes the value of elite starting pitchers. But in roto-style, **Justin Verlander** and **Clayton Kershaw** are both worth late first-round selections. They have no holes.

177 Troy Tulowitzki has missed 177 games over the last three seasons. He's too risky to take in the first round, despite the scarcity at SS.

Top hoops adds

1 **E'Twaun Moore, G, ORL** — The Magic have been ravaged by injuries and figure to deal J.J. Redick at the deadline. Moore is the present and future.

2 **Nick Young, SG, PHI** — Jason Richardson's knee injury is chronic and the sharpshooting Young is playing for a new contract.

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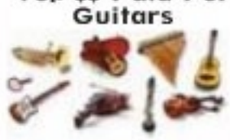

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